

Bridget O'Keefe

From: Lea Terhune <leaterhune44@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, January 15, 2022 6:10 PM
To: Bridget O'Keefe
Subject: Fwd: Public Comment, Ad Hoc Redistricting Committee, 1/13/22

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Public Comment submitted to ASd Hoc Committee Meeting, Jan. 13, 2022

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From: **Lea Terhune** <leaterhune44@gmail.com>
Date: Thu, Jan 13, 2022 at 3:48 PM
Subject: Public Comment, Ad Hoc Redistricting Committee, 1/13/22
To: richard hillyard <pompeyhccc@hotmail.com>, George Love <george.love077@gmail.com>, Daniel Munteanu <danny12197@gmail.com>, Jim Holway <jim@holway.us>, Lea Terhune <leaterhune44@gmail.com>, Greg Shepler <gregoryshepler@gmail.com>, Rama Kocherlakota <ramakocherlakota@gmail.com>, robert bristow-johnson <rbj@audioimagination.com>, Jeff Comstock <jgcomstock3@gmail.com>, Anne Brena <anne.brena@gmail.com>

Public Comment, 1/13/22

In regard to Draft for Review Memo, Dec 22, 2021.

Purpose [of Memo], summary of public outreach. The "very small sample" was either intentional or due to inept support systems. An excellent **survey** was delayed, chopped up, encumbered with non-essential verbiage, and finally dumped on a website that apparently no one used. Of the three **public forums**, the first blocked public access because info on City meetings calendar was wrong. The other two meetings started late, causing some people to leave. All the **committee meetings** were hard to follow: people in the room could not be seen or heard by virtual attendees. Process was confusing. One public commenter was given extra time to provide his information, but others were not given this privilege. Committee did not review and discuss survey results (which were initiated by representatives in Wards 1, 8, 4, and 7) or Meti data on responses collected at each public forum. Apparently the survey and Meti results are not included in this memo either. Positive: Strong support for small wards, two seats per ward and deleting district seats, and no support for an on-campus student housing ward is clear in the Memo.

Background: Specifics of charge to committee needed here. Memo says the committee was charged with getting feedback on the following, specifics need to be added for clarity: 1. Existing 8 wards, 4 districts, 2013 apportionment. 2. Previous 7 wards apportionment, 1993. 3. Number of councilors preferred per ward/district going forward. 4. Opinions about the current 8 ward / 4 district configuration. I checked City webpage to review the charge to the committee. Did not find the Council resolution there. ?? As I

recall, the resolution specifically asked for recommendations and the wording here does not seem accurate. The charge to committee should be quoted verbatim here.

Public Engagement: Clarify that the three locations are North End, Center City, and South End. Miller Champlain College confuses a lot of people.

Three Themes: Repetition of small number of participants has the effect of diminishing the results.

Theme 1: Ward 8 not working... The comments that follow are not legitimately related to valid redistricting criteria, which is based on population, communities of interest, natural geography, etc. Students are 30% of the City population. They are overrepresented in ward 8 because it was gerrymandered. They are a community of interest, on-campus dorms are neighborhoods, and UVM is a growth area. The problem is that the ward was blatantly gerrymandered with no collaborative process. The comments reported in this section are unworthy and do not bear repeating. As for residence halls being locked, so is most congregate housing in Burlington -- Thayer House, Cambrian Rise, etc etc. Candidates gain access by being invited by a resident to meet with others there, just like house parties are hosted throughout the city.

Theme 2: Residents favored multiple reps in ward configuration. Concern about larger districts and at-large councilors.

Theme 3: Ward configurations. Suggest the word 'cohesive' instead of *compact*. Census blocks dictate, for example, the long strip along the waterfront in the South End, integrating student housing in several wards creates some non-compact configurations, and dividing the NNE along North Ave is not compact.

The committee "urges City Council to hold an Advisory Vote on a series of map configurations" belongs in section Final Notes. It was raised at the last meeting in response to many issues, not just this theme.

Broader Public Input -anxious to see maps and distribution of the survey created by the committee before it was sabotaged!

Criterion 1. Keep current number of wards/increase overall size of Council: No consensus? There was clear preference for small wards, two councilors each as indicated earlier. Muddying up the outcome with this "no consensus" report of a broad range of options glaringly obscures the majority opinions from public and committee members.

Criterion 2. Keep current number of districts: Half a councilor was one reason. There were others, like two councilors could be elected from the same neighborhood, people are asked to vote for someone they don't know, distance fosters lack of accountability. Claims of benefits of "broader advocacy" were not discussed.

Criterion 3. Spreading work burden is not an issue related to even/odd number of councilors. Belongs in Criterion 1.

Criterion 4. Students in one ward. Lack of student political participation is not a valid reason to determine ward configuration. UVM has an ivory tower mentality. Students work in the community, shop and eat downtown, volunteer for special projects and at non-profits, serve internships in local businesses, but they are intentionally kept away from politics. As a student recently, as well as years ago, I know the president sends emails to students telling them to request absentee ballots from where their parents live, with no mention that students are eligible to vote in Burlington. Participation is not a valid criteria for representation or ward configuration, and not clarifying this for the committee was a missed opportunity.

Criterion 5. At-large seats? Three wards, one councilor each, with 3 at-large. Another example of using fringe ideas to dilute the mainstream which was NO to at-large councilors. Highlight one fringe idea, but ignore several people's advocacy for a Downtown Ward.

Criterion 6. Multiple reps per ward. *Nostalgia*? Really? That remark is uncalled for. Reviewing past configurations was part of the charge. The 8 wards today have the same population that 7 wards has, and people thought it worked well. That is not nostalgia. Remove that word.

Criterion 7. Another way to say this is no one felt that incumbency was a priority. Prettying it up for Councilors by adding transition may balance out term limits and mandatory age of retirement, but must be clear that people are more concerned about fair representation than protecting incumbency.

Criterion 8. Minimize population differences. Suggest: *Equal representation is clearly a priority.*

Criterion 9. Geographic areas, keep neighborhoods intact. Several considerations were raised that are relevant to this criterion. Examples: Desire for a downtown ward, desire to keep Ward 6 neighborhoods intact, desire to recognize Intervale swamp between NNE and ONE, desire to unify King/Maple neighborhoods of common interest, are a few that come to mind.

Criterion 10. Roadways, natural boundaries. Intervale. Others were mentioned.

Criterion 11. Relationship between Legislative Districts and Wards.

Final Notes

Add advisory vote on maps here.

Meaningful survey next time? - The survey that George did with others is excellent. Still time for the NPAs or an independent group to distribute that survey widely.

The committee recognizes ... the work ahead for the Board of Civil Authority, which is mayor and councilors.

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